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DISCOURSES

ON

A FUTURE EXISTENCE.

[Price Half-a-Crown.]



DISCOURSES 5
ON
A FUTURE EXISTENCE,
AN
INTERMEDIATE STATE,
AND
RECOGNITION OF EACH OTHER.

BY THE
Rev. R. SHEPHERD, D.D.
—
ARCHDEACON of BEDFORD.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE
POULTRY.

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TO
THE MOST REVEREND
HIS GRACE
JOHN, LORD ARCHBISHOP
OF
CANTERBURY.
MY LORD,

THE unremitting attention to the
Exigencies of Religion, which dis-
tinguish your Grace's Administra-
tion in the exalted station wherein

Provi-

Providence hath placed You, might afford a plea for the liberty I take in requesting permission to shelter under your Authority the following pages; claiming, as in common with whatever is connected with Religion, the condescension of your Grace's protection. But I have an additional motive; the satisfaction of thus publicly expressing my grateful sense of the many favours, with which your Grace hath been pleased to honour me.

The subject of those pages, though indeed so trite as to have exercised
the

the pens of contemplative men ever since the institution of letters, is so interesting also, as to justify every effort to place it in the strongest and clearest points of view. It enhances the enjoyment of prosperity, by securing the continued prospect of it: under the shade of adversity, it is always the greatest, sometimes the only, topic of consolation.

By Dignity of Character, by Example of Life and Solidity of Judgment, which in your Grace adorn the station you fill, and mark your administration, that you may long
continue

continue to conduct the important
concerns in which the interests of
this world and the next are united,
is the prayer of,

MY LORD,

With the greatest Respect,

Your Grace's dutiful

Most obliged

And obedient Servant

R. SHEPHERD.

DISCOURSES

ON A

FUTURE EXISTENCE, &c.

SERMON I.

I COR. xv. lv.

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING ?

O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY ?

IN a Christian Country little might we have supposed to see the ETERNAL HOUSE* of the ancient disciples of Epicurus revived, not by a few individuals only, but by a public avowal of the doctrine. †

* DOMUS ETERNA. So the Epicureans, as appears by many of their inscriptions, used to stile their burying grounds.

† On the portal of a great national cemetery at Paris is inscribed "AU SOMMEIL ETERNAL."

A

Great

2 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

Great Heaven ! and shall that yawning grave bury in eternal darkness all that was once most dear to me ? Shall that reach of mind on which with rapt attention I have so often hung, that glow of love and friendship which once entranced the congenial soul ; shall all that virtue too, which in the dear object of my affection exalted human nature, there moulder in eternal dust ? Is this the comfort, vain philosophy, thou bringest a mind drooping under affliction's heaviest bolt ? Oh, no : the language of true philosophy speaks better things. Let us then under its guidance endeavour to read that language ; as we find it written in the fair page of REASON. Let us hear what arguments of consolation it holds out in support of the hope with which it cheers me ; the soothing hope, that the friend of my bosom, though for a moment torn from it, still lives and is happy, looks down superiour on the anguish that wrings the heart of sensibility, and whispering consolation suggests, he has only changed his residence, and taken the destined journey a little before me. And if it be not to intrude too far into hidden mysteries, while we are on this subject, we will a little further extend our investigation ; and enquire whether it supplies us with a ray of hope, that we shall ever meet again.

I. And

Discourses on a future Existence, &c. 3

I. And first, looking into the state of my own mind at this moment, do I not feel conviction of the truth of what I am endeavouring to prove? Why do I possess such a Degree of intellectual faculty, as enables me to argue about a future state, if it have no existence. Why, in this case, do the powers of the mind extend beyond the limits of the world, with which I am only concerned: and why extend thus, only to deceive me? Why in pursuit of this meteor blaze is my attention diverted from more useful, more interesting, more necessary objects? If this world be the sum of all to me; hath it not sufficient attractions, solely to engage the mind so bounded by it? It holds out pleasures, that may profitably occupy me in devising schemes for the enjoyment of them. It presents a vast growth of troubles, which reason would be sufficiently and pertinently employed in devising means to shun. Foolish Epicurean, that on your own principles stand convicted of inconsistency! Why waste your hours, and consume your mind, in thinking and arguing on subjects uninteresting to you as the soul's immortality and a future state: those precious hours which nature allowed you, when you *chanced* to burst into existence, for purposes in common with your fellow brute

4 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

more near and dear to you, and more congenial to your soul? You trifle, when you urge they are the amusements of the mind, whose strong pinion often takes excursive flights into ideal realms. The argument is still unanswered: the mind hath not a movement, on your own principles, so foreign to it: the God of nature formed it with no volitions illusory or vain. As this world furnishes us with every object of pursuit necessary to a being, that is concerned with nothing beyond it; would not the understanding have served the purposes of life best, by being confined to those pursuits? And in that case would not the author of nature have confined it to them?

But strange, and difficult to be accounted for, on the supposition of man being a mere ephemeris of the world; this faculty of reason, in the extent in which he possesses it, expatiates with supreme delight on subjects no wise necessary to the body, nor allied to temporary or earthly objects. It extends itself to high and speculative subjects; and while it experiences its powers not sufficiently capacious for those great attainments to which it at present aspires, feels the flattery of hope that it shall hereafter be capable even of greater. The inference therefore
from

from those extensive powers of the mind is, that its concerns are co-extensive with its powers. The mole that is formed to delve in the earth, is not endowed with the powers of vision. And why should we have faculties that rap the soul to visions of future bliss ; if we were formed only to grovel in this world, our sole objects of concern, the good it supplies, and the evil it produces ? On this supposition, the art of living would be contracted within a narrow compass ; regarding only provision for the subsistence of the body and the gratification of the senses, and the avoidance of what might impede the one and destroy the other. Every operation of mind above what was necessary to those concerns would be a superfluous provision in nature : for instinct, that directs the brute, would for these purposes be sufficient to inform mankind. What need of the notion of a future state ; if we be to have no concern in it ? What need of all abstracted speculations, if we have nothing to do, but to sport in this world, like the Leviathan in the deep ; to eat, and drink, take our pastime in it, and die ? Indeed the idea of a post-existence would in this case not only be a superfluous principle in the mind of man, and foreign to his nature ; but it would be injurious too. Conferred

6 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

on him for the purpose of exalting man above the brute creation, and rendering him happier than them, it would have the very opposite effect. It rudely breaks in upon the pleasurable hour, as with a false writ of enquiry; and menaces him with imaginary evils, when in reality he has nothing to fear.

And the truth of this reflection experience evinces, not only in the heart-sickening checks, vice receives from such internal monitions; but in the mind's most elevated exercise of those high powers, which disqualify it both for the pleasures and business of common life. Habits of intense thinking diminish the force of bodily powers; and the mind absorpt in elevated speculations becomes averse to the busy pursuits of life, and loses its relish for the satisfactions those pursuits might otherwise afford. The exercise of reason so directed narrows the gratifications resulting from the intercourse of the world, and flattens the edge of enjoyments derived from the senses. As therefore the great enjoyments of this world are the pleasures of sense, and the general means of acquiring the command of those pleasures is by a steady and confined pursuit of our worldly interests; those, who most cultivate the mind, do thereby lessen their opportunities

cf

of procuring the satisfactions of life, as well as blunt their relish of those that may be in their possession. And hence follows the flat contradiction ; that the wiser a man is, the greater folly he discovers. Hence too the best men are in the worst condition ; in losing their equal share of common pleasures, not by a criminal abuse of those pleasures, but by living above them. But if with infinite rectitude providence conduct the affairs of this world ; that faculty of reason, which distinguishes man, and exalts him above the brute creation, conferred on him for the purpose of rendering him wiser, must render him happier too : wiser and happier in the degree in which he respectively employs it ; if not here, certainly in some other state of existence : a period wherein it will be more satisfactorily employed, and in which it will be gloriously rewarded.

II. Somewhat akin to this argument, in evidence that this life is not the final period of our existence, our appetites and desires afford another proof. These are ever on the stretch, yet never satisfied : ever pursuing some fancied good, but never satisfied with the fruition of it. No gratification in life is absolute. It only leads to a new wish, and another want. Our whole life in respect to our whole existence is a state of in-

8 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

fancy : adapted to each period of it, we have toys to engage us ; of which tired in turn, we fling them away, and continue ever grasping at something, which is ever out of our reach.

Now what does this dissatisfaction even with the enjoyments of life teach ; but that we are not yet at the place of rest, where the great Author of our nature designed us to be ; that we are not made solely for this world, nor chiefly for it. For as far as we can perceive and judge, all capacities are satisfied with their surrounding objects : and every thing finds rest and satisfaction in its own element. The restlessness therefore of men, their dissatisfaction with all enjoyments present, and their longings after some future fancied good, are plain indications that there is some good before them, some future state of acquiescence.

And this argument derived from the dissatisfaction which wise and good men experience in the ordinary pursuits and common business, as well as in the pleasures, of life, proportionably greater in the degree a man is wiser and better, will receive additional weight, in evidence that man is made for some more exalted station ; if we advert particularly to God's conduct in his moral government of the world. For if a man
be

Discourses on a future Existence, &c. 9

be dissatisfied with the world ; it is because he feels himself unhappy in it : and if the good and virtuous be more apt to be dissatisfied with it, that is, more unhappy in it, than the dissolute and wicked, if virtue in a single instance be found united with misery, supposing there is no future state to look to ; where shall we look for providential goodness in this ? On that supposition, the administration of this world appearing the effect of ill-design, or at best the work of chance, what becomes of divine wisdom ? If the affairs of this world be so involved and intricate, that such unequal distribution of good and evil *must* sometimes necessarily take place ; how shall we ascertain the infinitude of divine power ? These general observations we will in the sequel proceed more distinctly to illustrate.

III. That Almighty Being, which first created the universe, continues, as we observe in the course of nature ever providentially supported, to govern and direct it by certain general laws. The planets have their stated revolutions, the *sun knoweth his going down*, and even to the wandering comets their course is prescribed : so that notwithstanding the rapid, various, and continual movements of the heavenly bodies, nothing is thereby hurt or endangered ;
but

10 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

but the great harmony we see ever providentially maintained. He maketh the rivers to flow within their banks, and hath set bounds to the ocean. Flowers, herbs, and trees rise and vegetate, and observe their general laws. By his support the animal world subsists, taught by instinctive knowledge to pursue what is agreeable to their respective natures, and to avoid what would disadvantage and hurt them. Man is assumed a compound Being, consisting of spirit and matter. And since all bodies are regulated and governed by certain established laws; with regard to this other part of human nature which we term spirit, and which is the noblest part of man, there must be some law given, whereby its actions may be regulated, and whereto they are to be referred. And this law is that innate sense of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, which every man carries in his own bosom. This is that principle, which distinguishes him from the brute creation: and thus he stands in the chain of nature; a Being subject to passions, but endowed with reason to govern them, furnished with a sense of what is right and wrong, but necessarily determined to neither, being endowed with a freedom of will and action. And as reason was given him to direct his will, so likewise

likewise does he possess a principle, termed conscience; which watches over, and superintends his reason. Thus furnished with these two principles of reason and conscience, he is appointed the tacit judge and censor of his own actions. In the silence of darkness, in his most obscure retreats from the eyes and ears of his fellow creatures, even in his hours of gaiety, there is still something within, which puts his soul upon its trial; and never fails to pronounce; as he willingly obeys, or disobeys his reason. And as these impressions operating on the mind of man bespeak a law written on his heart; so doth such law demonstrate a judgment hanging over his head.

But if against this consequence it be argued, that in order to influence the conduct of mankind, though it might be expedient to impress their minds with the belief of a world to come, yet it was by no means necessary that there should be one; as the secret approbation accompanying a good action, and the tacit condemnation of ourselves on the commission of a bad one would in either case be the same: it is obvious to observe, that to admit the supposition of such a principle implanted in the human mind, on the ideal apprehension of what is never

12 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

to happen, is to attribute to the God of truth an act of deception.

And the same observation will apply in obviating another argument, which hath been often employed to invalidate the doctrine of a future state, viz, that it was the coinage of legislators and politicians; who discerning the efficacy of it, in enforcing obedience to the laws, in exciting to virtue, and restraining from vice, made it an engine of state, and hired priests to confirm and propagate the delusion. Is it then really acknowledged, that such a belief has such an effect? We avail ourselves of the concession, and ask in reply whether our Creator left any motive, consistent with man's freedom of will and action, that might conduce to virtue and deter from vice, unimpressed on the human mind; any thing uneffected to the future discovery of legislators and politicians. And if for such wise purpose he did impress on it so powerful a principle, as the apprehension of a world to come; would He found a motive to virtue on fiction's base, when He could effect his purpose by a truth: a truth, displaying infinite goodness, and consistent with all his wise decrees? Greater even than the folly of such a supposition is the impiety of it.

IV. But

IV. But farther, as this secret sense of right and wrong, for wise purposes so deeply implanted by our Creator on the human mind, has the nature, force, and effect of a law; it must possess more than a mere menace, it must, in common with all other laws, have its sanction too: that is, the violation of it must be attended with more pain than pleasure; and the observance of it with greater pleasure, than pain. Such sanction is essential to a law, in order to guard and enforce it: and the wisdom of the legislator is concerned in the annexment of it. Let us then look round and see, how in the instance of this law the sanction operates; let us question ourselves, whether in the present constitution of things more satisfactions might not be acquired by wickedness, for instance by sensual pleasures, by fraud, by oppression, than by a strict and rigid adherence to virtue. And this acknowledged, as in truth it must be, since the sanctions do not operate here, we must look farther for them; even to that future state, with a perception of which our Creator hath impressed us.

And in this view of the argument, as we have already observed the goodness of the Deity to be abridged, his wisdom impeached, and his power narrowed, by the denial of a future state;

14 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

so shall we also find his attribute of justice affected. In the ordinary dispensations of providence there is no discernible distinction of persons: the sun riseth "equally on the just and on the unjust." In the divine distribution of temporal advantages, even the undeserving often seem to be objects of his regard, and partakers of divine bounty: while the humble votary of religion is as frequently overwhelmed with troubles and affliction, and pines perhaps under the oppression of injustice and ignominious penury. Or, to place the argument in a still stronger light, do we not frequently see virtuous men suffering hardships even on account of their virtue, and vicious men enjoying all the satisfactions of life, as if in reward of, and by means of their vices? Here then we find the Almighty has given mankind a general law; and, that part of mankind, which observes such law, we see on that very account miserable: while those, who disobey their Creator's commands and break his law, still continue to enjoy the greatest marks of his favour. Is God, as the apostle argues, *unjust*? Or, as the psalmist exclaims, *hath He forgotten to be gracious*? That is a contradiction in terms: for the Being, whom we stile God, we suppose infinite in all perfections; and therefore infinitely

ly just, and good. No way indeed of accounting for those temporary dispensations of providence, which is consistent with the notions of divine justice, doth reason supply, except this one; the acknowledgement of a future state. The riddle is then resolved, all the numerous difficulties are removed, and the truth fully cleared up: while, on the strongest ground of conviction, we embrace the certainty of a future state from the necessity of it. The mysterious plan of God's dispensations in regard to this life, considered in this view, begins to clear up; but we may expect will be more fully illustrated hereafter: the little inequalities between the respective prosperity and adversity of men will then be made up, we shall at that period of retribution see unfolded the wisdom that directed virtue's suffering, and the triumphs of vice; and all the gracious ways of God will be justified to man.

V. From this view of suffering virtue and triumphant vice, respecting individuals, if we turn our eyes on the world at large, and contemplate man in the aggregate; in whatever condition we regard him, we see a great deal of real misery, and of unalloyed happiness not a single instance. Prosperity tempts him to wantonness

16 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

tonness and excess : Adversity to murmuring and impatience : riches are productive of care and anxiety ; and poverty is complicated misery. Labour is painful ; and idleness is irksome. Wisdom points out to us a deeper sense of the evils we encounter ; and folly exposes us to the edge of cross events. *To increase knowledge*, said the wisest of men, *is to encrease trouble : and yet*, adds he, *the soul without it is not good*. Our enjoyments soon pall upon us ; our disappointments and disquietudes sit heavy, and last long. We are devoured by eager appetites, and racked by the conflicts of contending passions.

Nor are our bodies better secured against the bolts of pain and trouble, than our minds. Disease waits for us in a thousand shapes, ever ready to seize and unharmonise our frail frames, and rob us of the little ease we might otherwise enjoy. These and numberless other evils, to which mortality is heir, and which whether we experience ourselves, or observe in others, the common ties of humanity in part make our own, furnish us with strong grounds of confidence, that, as our Creator did not make us only for this world, which if there be more misery than happiness in it would have been to create us for misery, though our first state of general existence be,
like

like our first entrance into the world, with tears and cries, our progress will be brighter. For our reason and the common notions of mankind teach us concerning God, that He is infinitely good and powerful; the fountain of benignity and perfection. And therefore we conclude from infinite goodness and perfection, that since misery prevails here, He hath made other provision for us, and that we may be happy hereafter.

VI. How do our longings fix on that **HERE-AFTER**! How do we anticipate it in our solicitude, to grave the record of ourselves here! All means are used to perpetuate mens' names and memories. Houses, cities, and lands we call by our own names. Books are written, exploits are performed from the same principle. For this the lump of dust is embalmed, the proud column rises, and the flattering monument is framed. And for this so general propensity to a future memory, as the minds of all men indicate, how shall we account; except by supposing the Author of nature originally impressed it on the human mind? But can we, dare we suppose, the God of truth would have given us those false longings after an ideal existence; if we were never to enjoy a real one? Can we ad-

mit the probability, I had almost said the possibility, of an idea so general, so apparently innate, so rootedly implanted on the human mind, as that of a future state, to be the baseless coinage of the imagination; a notion fictitious, false, and vain? If, when we quit this evanescent state of existence, all existence cease: what could be so nugatory, as the desire to be thought of, talked of, heard of hereafter? Why so anxious for a precarious Being in a mere name and memory, if we are never to possess a real one? No matter: nugatory, unaccountable, superfluous as this propensity to a posthumous memory may appear; still we possess it, we possess it universally, and therefore naturally. But as nature, or the God of nature hath implanted in the human mind nothing nugatory, or superfluous; what shall we conclude, but that He has given us the perception of what we shall hereafter in reality enjoy.

VII. It may be said, this notion so soothing and flattering is the offspring of pride. And I could grant, it might be so; if it were the dogma only of a few philosophers. But all the world is not run mad with pride. Yet this notion is adopted by all mankind. And here is another argument in proof of the truth of the doctrine, grounding on the universality of it. It is not the peculiar

peculiar notion of this, or that country; or of any particular age: it extends backwards in point of antiquity, as far as history will carry us, its progress in unbroken chain reaching to the present hour. All nations own it, all nations profit by it: in civilised and polished, as well as in the more barbarous states, it enforces national duties, and is the cement of society. And considering man as by his Creator formed a social Being, whatever principle he may possess universally impressed on the mind, and contributing to support society, must be referred to his Creator too.

If all nations were governed by the same laws; who would hesitate to ascribe those laws to a tablet written by the Deity on the human heart? If all nations entertained on any one point one general opinion; would it not be reasonable to refer it to the same cause? And is not this exactly the case, respecting the doctrine of a future state? Amidst the vast variety of nations and people, they who are strangers to each other's laws and customs, and as different in their manners, as they are distant in situation, all concur in the common belief of a future existence. The opinion is as general as light, and extends as far as the empire of reason.

Thus stands the proof of a future state on
B 2 principles

principles of reason: and if these arguments, taken singly, be not sufficient to carry conviction with them: added together they approach very near to demonstration. We Christians, however, have clearer evidence of the truth of this doctrine. Christ our Lord in his discourses expressly declared it; and evidenced it in his resurrection. His apostles, and disciples, and numbers of the primitive Christians, ere Christianity became established, lived miserably, and died miserably, in full confidence of this interesting truth. If we believe it, and we see what abundant reason we have to believe it, we shall be necessarily led to avail ourselves of it; and secure to ourselves a portion of that happiness in another world, which from the state and condition of human affairs is unattainable in this: Happiness unalloyed in quality; unbounded in duration. Of which that we may all be hereafter partakers, &c.

S E R M O N II.

2 SAM. Ch. xii. V 23.

I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT
RETURN TO ME,

IT has been objected to the Jewish religion, that it taught nothing concerning another, and a better life * ; which objection was by an eminent writer admitted, and ingeniously converted into an argument in proof of the divinity of it †. But the objection seems to have been unfounded; and the theory built on the admission of it, with whatever learning and ability maintained, must of course fall to the ground. Though the doctrine of a future state may not be directly held out in the books of the law, as an encouragement to the observance of it ; in the prophetic writings, and even in the historical parts of the old Testament, there appears so strong evidence

* Lord Bolingbrooke.

† Bishop Warburton.

22 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

of it having been at every period of their history the general belief of the people ; that nothing but powerful prejudice in favour of a system, and great ingenuity, could support the opposite opinion. There was indeed a small sect among the Jews, who denied the doctrine ; but as they were distinguished for their singularity, the peculiar tenet of the Sadducees serves only to confirm the truth of the contrary opinion being the received and general one.

The passage, which is the subject of my present discourse, is capable of two very opposite interpretations. It may signify, " my son is gone " everlastingly to mingle with the dust, which " must be my fate too : " or, " my son is gone to " another world ; and there I again shall meet " him." According to the first interpretation, the reflection is the language of despair ; admitted in the latter sense, of consolation. The context will beyond a doubt evince, which is the proper signification. And from thence it appears, that upon this consideration, " though " his son should not return to him, he should " go to his son," he arose from the bed of affliction, *he washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped ; then he came to his own house, and* admiri-

administered consolation to his afflicted family. The implication of the passage therefore is unquestionably consolatory : and the reflection is indeed matter of the greatest consolation, that in such a case of affliction can be administered ; it was the natural result too of a serious and devout mind, such as David possessed. And under the authority of the passage so understood, I proceed further to consider the subject of my last discourse.

The arguments that reason supplies in evidence of the reality of a future state, I presumed in that discourse to approach very near to demonstration ; I noticed the objections to those arguments, as in the course of them they arose ; and, to give full weight to the truth of the doctrine, the force of two general difficulties that doubt and curiosity have suggested, I will in the sequel examine ; which, of little weight in themselves, will lead to some interesting reflections.

I. If this doctrine, saith the Sceptic, so important in itself, and so conducive to the comforts of the human mind, be true ; why is it so faintly delineated ; why shaded to us in the dark ground of conjecture, rather than painted in the glowing colours of incontrovertible truth ?

II. And why, it is farther urged, hath even Christianity, whose boast is to have brought truth

24 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

immortality to light, afforded us no information of the nature of such a state.

I. As to the first exception, the arguments advanced in the preceding discourse prove it I think to be not sufficiently founded. I do not conceive the doctrine of a future state to be faintly adumbrated. The arguments indeed, which reason supplies in evidence of this truth, may some of them be of such a nature, as the gross of mankind, unused to abstruse speculations, are not able to comprehend or pursue. But without those arguments, the doctrine is generally admitted. Nations unrefined by science, untrained to the subtilties of argumentation, especially as employed on abstract subjects, with universal consent acknowledge it. It is an opinion natural, congenial to the human mind; no matter whether with philosophic acuteness unlearned men can give reasons, why it must be so: God is their Teacher, he wrote it on the mind of man, and the lesson must be true.

It might indeed have been more evidently declared: and to give full weight to the objection, let us for a moment suppose it had been so, and consider the consequences. Supposing our Creator had confirmed it to us in a stronger and a clearer manner, supposing he had made it a subject

ject of demonstration, had given us assurance of it by a continued train of messengers from another world, and that the object of their mission had been to picture to us the endless pleasures of that world ; let us consider what effect it would have on us, as inhabitants of this. Man is by his Creator placed in this world, as an active and social being ; he has many relations in life assigned him, he has many duties to fulfil. The world exhibits to him a busy stage, and calls forth his best exertions in the performance of the part, that is cast for him. He has his own wants to satisfy ; and, according to his station, those of others to provide for. He has difficulties to encounter ; and to cheer and support him in the discharge of such his painful labours, consistent gratifications are allowed him. But shew him in full blaze the felicities of another life ; and what a cloud would they cast on this ? He would lose his relish for the comparatively poor, and contemptible pleasures, which his gracious Creator hath holden out to him here, as sweetners of his cares, and incitements to duty. The business of life would stagnate ; and as the incitements to it ceased to stimulate, the duties themselves would be disregarded. In vain aspirings after that future happiness which is placed
before

26 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

before his eyes, he would overlook the purposes for which he was stationed here : every concern of life would be a burthen to him ; and, in the near view of the happiness before him, he would be in danger of losing it, by neglecting the means appointed as the qualification for its attainment. For this world is a state of trial and probation, which calls forth our best exertions in the discharge of active duties. It exacts the practice of many virtues ; and the successful conflict with many temptations. The mind must be tried and purified ; before it be exalted.

These considerations may suffice to evince the futility of the exception to the truth of a future state, from the defect of a more absolute assurance of the reality of it, than our Creator hath been pleased to grant us. They will also demonstrate the wisdom of the Deity, in not superseding the duties of this life by giving a more explicit assurance of another, than He has been pleased to grant us : and the arguments, that have been already urged in evidence of the reality of that other, will illustrate the Divine Goodness in indulging us with such perception of it ; as is sufficient to afford us the strongest motives to perform our duty here, in order to render ourselves

selves worthy of that happiness which is announced to us hereafter.

II. As to the next exception, it constitutes a question of curiosity. If we have sufficient assurance that we shall exist hereafter, happy or miserable, as by our conduct in this life we may deserve to be ; an unreasonable solicitude to know the nature of that happiness or misery would be presumptuous, and therefore neither the light of nature or revelation have specifically declared it. And unreasonable and rash would be the inference ; that because the nature of future happiness is not specified, therefore the existence of it is a doctrine that does not claim our belief. This would be a long stride to a false conclusion. The various opinions on the subject that various nations have adopted, like copies in painting which passing for the original of some eminent artist serve to prove the reality of an original, confirm the general truth. And reason, that, as we have seen, assures us of the real existence of such a state, though it furnish us with few particulars respecting it, represents it in general to be to the good a state of reward. As such we assume it, and so instructed suppose our nature will be exalted ; and may reasonably infer, the happiness, we shall then be destined to enjoy,

28 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

enjoy, will be such as we are now incapable of perfectly comprehending. Yet from what reason enables us to collect, and the hints which revelation occasionally affords, the subject we shall find not left altogether in impenetrable darkness. And as it is an interesting one, assisted with the light, which these two guides afford, we will in the sequel pursue it: as it is also veiled in mystery, we will pursue it with diffidence and caution.

The subject presents a vast field of conjecture. Some have supposed the soul to possess certain latent qualities; which, when it is disencumbered of its material clog, will be displayed, and open new sources of untasted pleasures.

Others have conceived, that if the same soul and body be reunited, they will possess the same qualities they had before they were separated, those qualities respectively improved and enlarged.

Others again have thought that the separated soul shall have a new body, endowed with other faculties than those it now possesses, and capable of greater pleasures, than those which in its present state it enjoys. And this opinion hath some support in scripture; and particularly in St. Paul's reasoning on the resurrection.

I leave

I leave those particular points of opinion, to consider some general ones more interesting to us ; and in the discussion of which we shall receive more assistance from the light of reason, and the clearer evidence of revelation.

1 And first, respecting future happiness, Reason seems to instruct us, that, it cannot consist in sensual pleasures: because all bodily gratifications have their plenary indulgence here. All appetences, as derived from the senses, find their corresponding objects in this world ; here fix, and satiate. But the improvement of the mind, our advances in knowledge seem in progressive state ; and neither satiate, nor satisfy. In those pursuits one acquisition only excites to the desire of another ; the mind's vast grasp ever reaching forward, ever gaining, and something farther ever in view : like a traveller, whose course lies over a long ridge of lofty mountains, who, one summit surmounted, has another in view, and, that gained, serves only to lead his steps to another. These unsatisfied desires in the pursuit of knowledge afford fair ground of argument, that those longings of the mind shall some time or other be fully gratified, and that future happiness shall in great measure consist in the enlargement of the intellectual powers.

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30 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

In our further enquiry, how far and in what respect the intellectual powers shall be enlarged, reason affords no aid ; there even imagination fails us. Revelation however will help us a little : on this point the scriptures reflect some light. They inform us that our happiness shall consist in a permissible approach to God, and a distant resemblance of Him in his imitable perfections : that, after death has closed our eyes, *we shall awake up after the likeness of God, and be satisfied with it* : and again, that *we shall see Him, as he is*. How that adorable Being will then communicate himself to his creatures, we cannot now either explain, or conceive, for *we know but in part, and see through a glass, darkly*. But we may satisfy ourselves with the assurance, that He will do it in a manner suitable to the nature of rational beings ; and we may conceive it to be in a communication by knowledge, love, and likeness. And according to this idea, imperfect as it is, we may collect, that to see God, will be to know Him ; and to know Him, must be to enjoy Him ; for the more we know Him, such is His greatness, the more we shall admire Him ; and such is His goodness, the more we shall love Him. And the more we know Him, admire Him, and love Him ; the more we shall
be

be led to imitate, and be raised to resemble Him.

2. Secondly, as the soul shall in the next state of existence be advanced in knowledge ; we are also instructed, that it shall receive an increase of positive happiness too. If amidst all the fascinations of this life a superior understanding and elevated turn of mind afford a kind of pleasure, which the world can neither take away, nor give ; how may we reasonably suppose those pleasures to be increased, when the inveiglements with which the world fascinates, and the evils with which it torments, shall no longer involve and perplex us ? The body itself, to which the soul is individually united, involved it in many evils ; and the world, like a vast prison-house full of noxious diseases, diffuses widely round many evils more. And therefore those pure and unmixed delights, the soul shall enjoy after it is freed from the dreggy particles of matter with which the body bends and ties it down, have been a general subject of exultation with all the philosophers in the heathen world, who admitted the immortality of it. And consistent with the whispers of Reason on this point, distinctly and clearly speaks the language of scripture. *God himself, saith the divine Apostle, shall be with them*

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32 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

*them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.** The former,—that is, all those evils, troubles, and calamities, which they saw and suffered in this world, shall for ever vanish and disappear ; there shall be left no pain to torment the body, no care to distress the mind, no vestige of those crosses and vexations, which infest the terrestrial state of man.†

3. Thirdly,

* Rev : 21. 4.

† Prophane as well as sacred history represents the original state of human nature to have been of very superior excellence to that which man at present possesses. And the implications of scripture give room to suppose, that had man continued in a state of duty and obedience to his maker, he would not have experienced death, but have passed in a regular gradation to a state of greater happiness and perfection. Death therefore having broken the original chain of nature, and interrupted the continuation of human happiness ; the state destined for those, who have exercised themselves in virtuous habits and are qualified for the participation of happiness in the world to come, it is no improbable supposition will be, immediately after death, and before the general resurrection, a restoration to that state of felicity, human nature enjoyed before sin and death had effected the breach in it. And accordingly our Saviour with exactest truth told the repentant malefactor, that he should that day be with him in
Paradise ;

3. Thirdly, as the doctrine of a world to come hath in all ages obtained the unforced assent of all mankind ; various, as might be supposed, have been the conceits about the locality of it. Some have placed it in the centre of the earth : nor have there been wanting those, who have fixed it in the sun. Others have confined the departed soul to the regions of surrounding air.* And others again have consigned it to some or other of the planets. But all the satisfaction on this point that reason or revelation affords, is, that good men will hereafter be finally happy in a place stiled, in scripture language, Heaven, and the wicked miserable in a place, termed Gehenna, or Hell. Cicero hails with ecstacy the glorious day, when he shall join the blest

Paradise ; using the very name affixed to that region of happiness in which mankind were originally placed : and with the name may we not believe the word of truth pronounced the thing ?

• Hence the old Celtic doctrine, which we find expressed in some of the fragments of the ancient Bards and Druids : wherein their heroes are represented as addressing the shades of their departed ancestors, whom they suppose enthroned on clouds to inhabit the vast expanse above us, sometimes in invocations to assist them, sometimes to look down upon their glorious labours.

34 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

society of the great and good.* But not a word doth the great philosopher in any part of his writings suggest respecting the place. And yet because reason doth not afford us ground whereon to build even the probability of a conjecture on the subject, and revelation is silent about it ; let us not be alarmed : Omnipotence is the architect of the world, which He hath assured to us ; and His is the immensity of space, wherein to build it.

4. Thus uninformed as we are of the particular locality of the world to come, the object, that seems next to present itself to our consideration, is the society we shall there enjoy. And on this point of enquiry, which is much more interesting to us than the place, reason we shall find will afford us some light, and revelation will contribute more. There is no property of man, that more distinguishes him from the rest of the animal creation, than his social character. Those fond relations of parent, child, husband, brother, friend, are the sinews of society which tie men to each other by a compact, not dissolving as soon as the mutual wants of each other cease, but continuing to bind them closer and closer,

* De Senectute.

as time lengthens the connection. Hence the chain that often confines us to a spot, where surrounded by those tender relatives, we prefer the struggle with care, poverty, and distress; rather than migrate to a distant soil, where perhaps those evils might be avoided, and every opposite good, honour, affluence, and ease might be procured and enjoyed. Hence too the aggravated pangs of death, that rend the heart on leaving, when we are summoned hence, our near and dear relatives behind us. So formed by our Creator for society, that social appetite so interwoven with our nature, why should we suppose that we shall not carry about us, through every mode of existence, as long as we continue to exist? Without it we should not be human beings: and in the larger degree those relations extend, the larger share of happiness, other circumstances permitting, it is observable we generally possess: and on the contrary, to be unsocial, is, in synonymous terms, to be unhappy.* This principle therefore, so characteristic of human nature, so congenial to the soul of man, so conducive to his happiness even in this life,

* On this idea is founded the punishment, lately introduced in this country for malefactors, of condemnation to separate cells,

36 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

reason instructs us to conclude will be continued to him in the next state of existence, and probably with increased satisfactions, and in a more extensive degree.

5. And having such ground to believe that the social appetites, we enjoy here, shall be indulged us in the next state of our existence, we find ourselves a great way advanced in our farther inquiry, who in that future state will be our associates. In this investigation if we attend to the feelings which nature impresses; they instruct us, that to render us happy in the society to which we may be introduced, it must consist of Beings possessing dispositions, inclinations, desires similar to our own. As therefore to the good the next state will be a state of happiness; the blessed inhabitants of the world, to which they are called, we infer, shall be distinguished for their goodness too. It would be a heavy drawback from the happiness of the next world, if the pure of heart and votary of virtue should be consigned to the society of spirits stained and polluted by the practice of vice. Similitude of tempers and manners is a chief ingredient in the satisfactions of society, which we experience here: it is so essential to the happiness of a human being; that shut up a strictly virtu-

ous

ous person in a house devoted to profligacy and riot ; and, with the command of every thing conducive to the plenary enjoyment of happiness, amidst a profusion of gratifications, he would be miserable. Accordingly, as the happiness of the next life is assumed to be an increase of happiness ; whatever derogates from it in this, it is reasonably inferred, will find no place there. In the next world therefore reason gives us assurance of finding a society good as ourselves, like ourselves, and qualified to conduce with us to mutual happiness.

Thus far reason goes in our information : let us next consult revelation on the point. Scripture informs us, that the wicked shall go to a place of everlasting punishment, *prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. And there are some passages in scripture which impliedly afford us the converse instruction ; that the good shall be translated to those realms of bliss which the good angels inhabit. When our Lord says, in the next world *they shall be as the Angels of God* : * If in
manners,

* I will not, with the “ cunning commentators” of Dr. Donne, who slip over a passage because it is difficult or may seem to contradict a favourite opinion, pass this text un noticed. *In the resurrection*, saith our Lord, *they neither*

38 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

manners, and habits, and customs men shall in

*marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God,** And the declaration hath by some been thought to militate against the supposed knowledge of each other in a future state : which has no such direct, nor, as I conceive, even implied signification. The words were addressed in answer to a question of the Sadducees, urged with an affected quaintness against the existence of a future state. And the plain and obvious signification of the passage is, that in the resurrection, that is, in a future state, the sensual pleasures will not attach to our renovated nature : that as there shall then be no more death, neither will marriage, instituted to supply the waste of mortality, be any longer necessary, and of course have place any longer. But to infer from thence, that all knowledge of each other shall be blotted out from memory, is neither a necessary conclusion, nor a just one. Before this can be made good, it must be proved that in the next state we shall lose all consciousness of what we were in this. And when that is evinced, another and more difficult question will present itself : which is, “ What is the principle that shall constitute our identity ? ” If it be again replied, that *all* our consciousness will not be effaced, but only a part of it : it still remains to be resolved, where we shall draw the line between the portion of consciousness that will be retained, and that which will have no place in memory. We must afford some reason for any part that we may suppose blotted out : and it would be difficult, I conceive, to assign a satisfactory one for the erasement of the knowledge, the innocent, the delightful knowledge of each other.

* Matthew, 23, 30.

the succeeding state of existence become like the Angels ; so qualified for their society, fitted for it by a resemblance of them, why may they not cherish the hopes that they shall be admitted into their fellowship and communion ? When a sinner repents, the Angels are represented as being so interested for his happiness, as to rejoice in his conversion. And how shall we better account for that joy ; than by supposing that they thereby gain a companion, a friend, one associate more ? *Father*, saith our Lord, *I will that they, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* * And where doth he reside, but in his kingdom : where legions of Angels, as himself informs us, are at his command ? If therefore he willed that his immediate disciples should be with him ; all his faithful followers we may conclude will join the blessed assemblage, one fold under one shepherd, happy in his presence, and united in community with each other. In words still clearer doth the apostle to the Hebrews express himself respecting their admission into the society of blessed spirits. *Ye are come*, says he,—*to an innumerable company of Angels, to*

* John 17, 24.

40 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

*the general assembly of the church of the first born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.**

This declaration in the society of Angels directly includes *the spirits of just men made perfect* : those who have perfected and finished their course ; who have escaped all the dangers and temptations of the present world. With the above passage, though others might be cited to the same purport, I will conclude my citations from scripture, enforcing the suggestions of reason ; in proof that the society, with which the good shall in the next world be united, will consist of beings of dispositions virtuous, wise, and happy ; angels, and purified spirits of the just and good.

We have now gone a great way under the guidance of reason and revelation, in preparing for the question, which, on the loss of a near and dear friend, interested affection with earnestness and solicitude to its own heart addresses ; “ shall “ we hereafter ever meet, and recognise each “ other, again ?” The hope of that is real consolation ; it is among the first pleasures anticipation supplies : let us enquire, what ground we have to entertain it.

• Hebr. 12, 22, 23.

6. We have already assumed man a sociable being, with relations, not ceasing with the instinctive wants that produced them, but strengthening by continuance, and clinging closer and closer to the heart. The child's wants no longer exist; but filial and parental affection continues, time not extinguishing, but increasing it. Husband and wife, when instinctive passion has subsided, feel an affection, more permanent than it, still tying their hearts with mutual fondness to each other. What shall we say of friendship; an affection founded not on want, or any sensual instinct? How does the mutual attachment of congenial minds increase by time and converse; each feeling himself only half of the other, and only, when together, perfectly and compleatly one! Shall we suppose these near and dear connections, increasing in strength as by time united, if this world be but the beginning of our existence, and there be another to succeed it, can we conceive these fond attachments, scarcely formed before they are dissolved, never again to be united? This world, as the beginning of our existence, is the beginning of all our virtuous habits, of all our opening attachments: and if, growing and increasing as we proceed in life, they be by death suddenly and everlastingly dissolved;

solved; they might seem to be begun, only that we may be left disconsolate and afflicted for the loss of them. But why should they be dissolved? If there be a world to come, where the good and virtuous, *the just made perfect*, shall again exist; why shall it not be given them in that world to meet, and mutually recognise the near and dear objects of their former affection? Let conjecture, if it can, produce a reason why it should not. If conjecture can not take such ground; reasons not being wanting to support the opinion, that it will, we must admit the truth of it.

We with reason believe that our capacity of knowledge shall in the next world be gloriously improved: and what reason is there to conjecture, that we shall lose a single ray of any beneficial knowledge which we now possess? No such loss can be included in a gradation towards perfection. When therefore the souls of good men hereafter meet and are made perfect; we must suppose they retain all their former knowledge, and likewise have a large portion of additional knowledge communicated to them. And that knowledge, and that happiness especially, which we leave with most regret, expectation flatters us we shall again enjoy, in the renewal of
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our virtuous affections for kindred and congenial souls. It is the only kind of future knowledge, and of happiness from thence resulting, of which we can form any possible comprehension: and therefore, indulged with the hopes of it, we trust those hopes will not deceive us.

Where shall we fix the extent of consciousness? If it be necessary to constitute identity; why should it not extend to circumstances in our former existence most interesting and affecting? Shall consciousness just so far serve us, as to suggest, we once existed; and, as to every particular in that existence, shall memory be blotted out? What is consciousness of past-existence; but consciousness of deeds, good or bad in that existence committed? And how shall we, or why should we, separate deeds from persons; implicated and involved as they are with one another?

Considering further this world as a school of discipline, and the next as a state of retribution, our station in the one will we must suppose be respectively assigned according to our particular merits in the other; and may not unreasonably conceive, that we shall consequently retain marks of distinction, and powers of discrimination; some individual characters of our former existence and condition. And so appointed, and so charac-

44 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

charactered, it is not likely that we should want either propensities to search for, or powers to discover, our friends and relations in a state of prior existence. All this is probable; yet I contend no farther for the general theory, than as it contributes to place in a view conciliatory of rational assent the special point of mutual recognition; supported as it is by other arguments, and the stronger implication of Revelation.

When we reflect how largely according to our present apprehension of things a knowledge of each other in that state, of whatever nature it may be, we are destined hereafter to enjoy, would contribute to our happiness in it; even that consideration, which heightens the beauty of the prospect, tends also to strengthen the expectation, that what we now anticipate will be hereafter in reality indulged us. After our heart-rending separation, to recognise one another in a better world, what ecstacy of joy would it impart! How would it heighten the pleasure of that *conversation which is in Heaven*, to enjoy it with an old and dearly loved friend; with those, whom we had formed to virtue, or to whose forming hand perhaps we owed our own; with those, by whom supported, or whom with mutual aid supporting, we had safely passed through the stormy

stormy paths of life, never again to sigh or sorrow more ! And as every consistent degree of happiness, consistent according to God's decree with the nature of man, will we humbly conceive be indulged him ; this large addition of happiness, we hope and trust on the best argument that can be produced, the infinite goodness of the Almighty, will not be withheld.

But it may against this supposition be urged, that if we be indulged in the knowledge of those friends that are happy ; we must also know, by not finding others in those realms of happiness, that they are miserable : and if the former knowledge would increase our happiness, the latter would proportionably derogate from it, and tend to render us miserable. But this does not follow ; it is not an inference, that because we know the happiness of happy friends, we must also know the misery of those that fail of happiness. Those may not only be struck out of the book of the living, but out of the memory also of those who are there enrolled. Our knowledge, all our knowledge, we trust, in the next world will be improved ; all but the knowledge of sin and misery ; and with that state, Revelation instructs us, sorrow is incomparable.*

* Revelation 21, 4.

46 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

In further confirmation of this pleasing doctrine, let us advert to the general reception it has among all nations obtained; an assent almost as universal, as the doctrine of a future state itself. The poets of Greece and Rome inculcated it; and some of the best men, and greatest philosophers, of those polished nations both believed and taught it. "O glorious day," says one of "the greatest of them," when I shall leave *this* "sink of profligacy and vice" behind me, and "join my beloved Cato in the assembly of the great and good." When the wretched African is torn from his family and friends, and sold to a savage master in a distant quarter of the globe; we know his comfort, his consolation, his confidence is in the hopes of meeting in unmolested realms of happiness his beloved friends again. This in foreign lands is his song of rapture, when the heart is exhilarated; this is his theme of consolation, when he sits down by the waters of captivity and weeps. The untutored inhabitant of remote islands in the South seas, as modern travellers inform us, when with voluntary incisions she hath sluiced her blood in agonies of grief for the loss of a husband, a parent, or a child, throws away the instrument of desperation, and

• Ex hac Turba et Colluvione.—

Cic

calms

calms her troubled mind, in the prospect of meeting again. Nay, and even when the expiring Christian bids the friend of his bosom, the object of his affection, or the partner of his cares and joys, the long FAREWEL; how does he feel the agonizing soul supported, which sometimes expires in smiles of sweet complacency, on the hope, the belief, the confidence of meeting again!

If nature teach this; it is the God of nature that so instructs: if religion inculcate it; it is still the doctrine of God: it is the doctrine of Him, who is the essence of goodness and the fountain of truth, of Him who can not deceive.

Turning from the volume of nature to that of revelation, the same doctrine we shall find enforced. The general tenour of the new testament represents the good and virtuous in the next world, *living with Christ*; as composing *his kingdom*, and, as such, living of course in community with one another; *heirs and joint heirs of the same promise*. And in that mutual intercourse with each other, on what principle of reason shall we deny of each other the the mutual knowledge? On Peter occasionally urging his own merit and that of his fellow apostles, in leaving all that they had and following Christ, our Savi-

our.

48 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

our tells them; that, “ in the regeneration [the
 “ renovation of things] when the son of man shall
 “ sit on the throne of his glory, they also shall
 “ sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve
 “ tribes of Israel.” And who can conceive
 otherwise of that promise, than that it evidently
 implies, the twelve apostles so appointed would
 perfectly know each other? And if these judges
 know each other? why shall we deny the same
 mutual recognition to those that shall be judged?
 There seems nothing adducible in disproof of the
 cotemporaries of those tribes, on that awful oc-
 casion summoned to the solemn tribunal, being
 known to, and knowing, each other. And if
 the tribes of Israel shall then know each other,
 why shall not all mankind?

I have already advanced the opinion, that the
 stations of the good in the next world will be
 appointed with individual distinctions, according
 to their particular merits in this *: in confir-
 mation of which opinion the prophet Daniel de-
 clares, that *they that be wise shall shine as the
 brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many
 to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*†
 In similar allusion, the apostle to the Corinthians

* See Page 43.

expresses

expresses himself: *As one star differeth from another star in glory; so also shall it be in the resurrection.** And thus individually distinguished in the next world; such distinction being in consequence of our conduct in this, some marks of discrimination that may distinguish us here, might I observed, reasoning abstractedly, attach to us hereafter: which doctrine, we hence collect, has from scripture also the same implied support.

When our Lord asserts, in confutation of the Sadducean doctrine, *the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*, to be *the God of the living, and not of the dead*; † will it be doubted, that the Patriarchs, so eminently distinguished, as being alive, were alive to each other? And if they then lived in mutual knowledge of each other, it is a plain and obvious inference, that so also shall we.

Such was the opinion of the royal mourner, expressed in the words of the text. According to the exposition of the passage already offered, it clearly signifies, that he should meet his son, recognise him, and enjoy his society? Else where was the consolation implied? If he were never to know him after their separation in this

* 1 Cor. 15, 42. † Matt. 22, 32.

50 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

world, know him as a relation, a near and dear connection; that son was for ever lost to him. It is indeed a degree of consolation, to know that our friends, when they depart this life, are happy in the next: but it is not a consolation equal to that of going to them, meeting them, seeing them happy, participating with them in that happiness, and enjoying their society; and nothing less than this the reflection of David seems evidently to imply.

I have not yet finished my observations on this interesting subject; nor can I comprise them within the limits of this discourse: I must therefore refer them, with their proper inferences, to a future occasion. And in the mean time I leave to every one, to form his own reflections on the general truth of what I have endeavoured to illustrate and confirm. They will lead him to appreciate this world, and the next. And on a comparative view, he will easily distinguish, which claims his utmost attention, and which merits his contempt. When he considers how little difference there is, in point of happiness, between the highest situation of life and the lowest; he will wonder at the pains he has taken, at the toils he has endured, at the cares it has cost him, to acquire a little and a little more of this world's good,

to

Discourses on a future Existence, &c. 51

to rise in it a little and a little higher. He will lament, that he has not with more earnestness exerted himself to secure an eminent station in the world to come; where every degree of eminence will be a degree of happiness. And reflections such as these cannot but influence his future conduct. Under the impression of them I therefore leave him; supplicating God, of his infinite goodness, to give efficiency to them in the attainment of everlasting happiness, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour.

S E R M O N III.

MATT. xxiii. 43.

TO DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.

THAT death is a change of existence, and not an annihilation of it; that it only alters our mode of being, and does not destroy our being; that it is the portal of another world, and not of everlasting sleep; we have already seen fairly written in the page of reason, and graven in deeper characters in the sacred scripture of revelation. But however general the belief of a future state, doubts have been entertained of the immediate enjoyment of it, after the precincts of this world are passed. It has been surmised, that a long sleep awaits the departed soul, even till the last trumpet rouse it to a general resurrection, for the purpose of a solemn trial, and a general judgment. Not a comfortable doctrine this: for though the two points, death and resurrection, even if a hundred thousand years should roll between them, will apparently touch each other; the mind cannot divest itself of the sensation of
a long

a long intervening state of non-entity. It is pained at the idea, and inquisitively asks; when the soul quits the body, if it be not entirely extinct, in what mode of torpid existence the active principle of spirit reposes; where is the bed, on which it lies, held in the fetters of death's near relation * sleep? You call it sleep: but either shew me how, or inform me where, it exists; else I must think and feel it extinction.†

That as soon as the soul quits the body, it

* *Consanguineus leti sopor.* — VIRG.

† Though school Divinity be out of fashion, the fair and candid reasoner will attribute to an argument all the credit it deserves, whether it flow from the pen of a school-man, or of a modern materialist. On this presumption I take occasion in this place to address to the candour of the advocate for the sleep of souls the following passage. “ If the soul be not a permanent substance, but only a quality or crisis, which, when the body dies, perisheth and is extinguished with it, it is impossible that the same numerical man should rise after death; because the form or soul which perished, can not be numerically the same with the form or soul which is restored. For that is numerically one, which is contained in one common term; as that is one line, which is not cut off or interrupted; and that one motion, which is not discontinued by rest. But there is no common term between that which once was and perished, and that which afterwards is produced: for non-existence came between them, and therefore they can not be numerically the same.”

54 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

exists in another state, that it is not for a moment inert and torpid, the light of nature suggested to the Heathen world : it was the opinion of the wisest men in the most polished states, those for instance of Greece and Rome ; it is the opinion also of the more barbarous countries in every quarter of the globe. The sacred writers, when they speak of a future state, as in appealing to it their general object is to excite to virtue and deter from vice, include in it the doctrine of a future judgment, and final retribution of rewards and punishments ; previous to which is implied a resurrection. And as such general judgment, when Christ shall descend in awful pomp to judge the living and the dead, is represented as not taking place till the consummation of all things ; to that period, by a loose assumption, some have in opinion been led to defer the resurrection, as in supposed union with it. But the term resurrection, according to the original word, means no more than a re-instatement ; which, if referring to existence, may take place immediately after death, as well as at a distant and general period ; and may be, and is, I conceive, as to time, distinct from the general judgment. In that period of future existence, between the resurrection and the general judgment,

which

which is termed the intermediate state, it is intimated in scripture that the good shall enjoy a degree of happiness, and the wicked suffer misery; but it is also from thence collected, that neither shall respectively receive their full and ultimate retribution, till the general judgment.

Another reason, that has contributed not a little to induce some to slip over the intermediate state, appears to have been an apprehension that the doctrine in some measure countenanced the notion entertained by the church of Rome concerning purgatory. And it seems with me scarcely to admit a doubt, that the doctrine of an intermediate state was really the doctrine of the apostolical and primitive ages; and that the Romanists afterwards availed themselves of it for mercenary purposes. Hence masses for the dead, exorcisms, and the long ritual list that enriched and aggrandised that secularised church. But what is there so perfect, as not to be liable to corruption? And why should truth be rejected, because it may be abused? Let us not be induced, through a vain fear of purgatory, to relinquish the just hopes of Paradise. Reason assumes the soul an active principle, alike incapable of inertion, as decay: and supposes it, when it leaves this world, to exist in some happy and

more perfect state. We will briefly enquire how far the language of scripture in this article confirms the suggestions of reason.

When, on the murder of Stephen, his prayer was, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*; I think it very clear, that his petition was for the immediate reception of his spirit: of which if any doubt be entertained, a declaration of St. Paul will illustrate it. *I am in a strait*, saith the Apostle to the Philippians,* *between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, for it is much better: but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.* St. Stephen's petition to Christ to receive his soul, and the assurance which St. Paul expresses that after he departed hence, he should be with Christ, do certainly allude to the same period: viz. the period of their immediate departure hence. This is clearly ascertained by the manner in which St. Paul expresses himself. *It is better*, says he, *to depart hence, and to be with Christ.* So it certainly was; if, when he departed hence, he would be with Christ. But surely he would have been much better here, an active labourer in Christ's vineyard on earth, than to be in a state of insensibility, a mere non-

* Phil. i. 23.

entity. He would certainly have judged it better, to have enjoyed existence in this world with his friends and companions, his fellow labourers in the great cause, which brought his Lord from Heaven, than to have lain useless in the grave, lost to all good purposes in this life, and to all enjoyment of another.

Let us next examine the passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, where our Lord declares the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the God not of the dead, but of the living."* The declaration was made to confute the Sadducees, who denied the existence of a future state. But when our Lord made use of this argument, if those patriarchs had not at the time been numbered among the living, had they been then held in the bonds of death; would he with such an instance as this—indeed, on that supposition, with a false assumption would he have confronted them? The passage, to acquire propriety, necessarily implies, that they were then alive; and the argument in form stands thus: "God is the God, as you acknowledge, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but He is the God, not of non-entities, but of living exist-

* Matt. 22, 32.

"ences;

“ences; therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 “are now living. They are living souls, still
 “under the protection of their God, and still
 “enjoying, perhaps in a nearer approach to
 “Him, marks of his favour.”

These passages we will close with that of the
 text: *to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*
 We can not dispute the truth of the assurance:
 we must acknowledge, that the malefactor was
 according to our Lord's promise that day in the
 enjoyment of his society, in the place of separa-
 ted souls, by him denominated Paradise. Un-
 less we admit the shifts and subterfuges of certain
 sectarists to evade the force of this plain text;
 which, says a very learned and able prelate*,
 “are so perfectly ridiculous, that I must make
 “myself ridiculous, if I should mention them,
 “much more if I should go about seriously to
 “refute them.”

One therefore of these two inferences must
 follow: either a miracle must have been effect-
 ed on this malefactor's account, by which he
 escaped the common destination of mankind,
 and, instead of a state of insensibility, participated
 of the happiness of superior beings, enjoying the

* Bishop Ball.

perciency of existence with them in paradise: or he was removed to that state of happy existence, into which the separated souls of good men, *the spirits of the just made perfect*, after their departure from this world are admitted; in reward for his belief in Christ, and acknowledgement of his divinity: *Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

That the first was not the case, may I think be presumed from the following considerations. First, this malefactor does not appear to have been a character, that merited the display of such a miracle in his favour. He had, according to his own confession, been a very bad man, and suffered that severe punishment *justly*: we can scarcely therefore suppose, that he was made so eminent an exception to the common lot of humanity, as such a miracle represents him. In the next place, it was a miracle which could not be attended with the same circumstance of publicity, with which all the other miracles of Christ were accompanied; nor, through defect in that circumstance, in any degree contribute, as they did, to illustrate the divinity of his mission.

Hence it follows, that the latter inference is the proper and true one: that the malefactor, in common with other sinners, to whom we find
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our Lord on their repentance and belief in him had spoken pardon and peace, had obtained remission of his sins; and, in consequence of such forgiveness, passed, according to the common lot of humanity, into the paradisiacal state, the region destined to receive the departed souls of the just and good.*

Those

* I mean not to pass by a text, that has been supposed to militate against the doctrine, for which I am contending. *Martha says, I know my brother will rise again in the resurrection in the last day;* supposing the soul would not be raised, or re-established in existence, till summoned to the general judgment at the last day. And from her declaration may clearly be inferred such her belief. But what does our Lord reply to her suggestion? *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, even though he die, shall live: and every one, that liveth and believeth on me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this?* The question, *believest thou this*, evidently implies, that our Lord had instructed her on a point, of which she was before ignorant. Let us then consider what was the article, in which she had expressed her belief. It was *in the resurrection at the last day*. This opinion of her's our Lord corrects; and tells her, that through him is the resurrection; that to the believer in him there is no continued death; but that, *he shall pass from death unto life*.

The instruction, which our Lord in this passage communicated to Martha, exactly corresponds with the general doctrine of scripture, viz. that death was denounced as the punishment of man's disobedience; and that Christ purchased for him

Those observations premised, in brief detail of what the scriptures inculcate respecting a future state, the doctrine is as follows. *Man was made perfect*: that is, perfect in his nature; destined to a progressive advance in knowledge and happiness, had he continued in that state of perfect innocence, in which he was created. But becoming disobedient to his Almighty Creator's commands, he incurred the penalty of such his disobedience; which was, death: *dying thou shalt die*. And as by one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin; so by one man also came the remission of sin, and a re-instatement in the original possession of life. The penalty of sins thus paid, and the power of death superseded, the departed soul is placed in the same state it would have enjoyed if it had observed *the righteousness of the law*, that is, remained in a state of unfinning obedience: of course, it must after death immediately exist in a state of perfect happiness. And by his own resurrection brought conviction even to the senses that he should not be holden by it; and therefore that after death has been executed on us, through Christ we are re-established in existence, and live. So that in effect, as our Lord tells Martha, *we never die*; death being no more than a door opening from one state to another.

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ception, a candidate for progressive happiness and knowledge, and greater degrees of perfection, after a general judgment at the consummation of all things shall have determined its destiny.

The general doctrine of a future state we have already considered on the principles of natural reason; and have found it supported by arguments as conclusive, as any speculative point will admit. The clearer evidence of revelation, as we have also seen, affords not only a confirmation of the general doctrine, but instructs us in several important particulars respecting the nature of it. To this purpose the portion of scripture, which I have made the subject of this discourse, in an especial manner contributes. It corroborates the import of other texts, in ascertaining the existence of the soul in a state of happiness and percipiency; and establishes the belief of such existence taking place immediately on the soul's separation from the body on its passage through the solemn portal of death. To some interesting inferences from the words of the text, thus understood, I propose to assign the sequel of this discourse.

I. And first, the locality of departed souls being fixed in Paradise, gives us the idea of their
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being together; not disposed of in different planets, or dispersed in various parts of space, but assembled in one general congress, in one and the same district, region or clime. And this idea favours the opinion, advanced in the preceding discourse, of a mutual recognition of each other. Indeed it is not unreasonable to suppose that object may form a chief reason, why our beneficent Creator should consign all the inhabitants of this world to one common place of resort: because it was the will of infinite goodness, to make the happiness of the good in the next world as compleat, as the nature of man, and the state to which he is hereafter destined, will admit. This argument founded on the goodness of Almighty God has been already noticed: let us pursue it a little farther.

The divine goodness do not all the gracious proceedings of our Creator, in regard to man, through life demonstrate? And in none is it more conspicuous, than in the satisfaction the social sensations create to him. What though, with hand profuse of blessings, He hath scattered through the world objects of pleasure correspondent with every appetite of man; those sensations are necessary to give them their true relish. The mind has so great a share in the happiness
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64 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

of the man ; that bodily gratifications alone, though in the highest degree possessed, can not render it compleat. Honour, power, pleasure are imperfect and unsatisfactory ; unless shared with those we love, and enjoyed with those in whom we delight.

They may for themselves be coveted, and without appendages may be possessed : but the relative affections are necessary to the enjoyment of them ; they give to those possessions their proper zest. And even in the humbler walks of life they form a charm, that binds the social mind of man in bands so firm and close, as neither the blandishments of sense, nor the magic of ambition can dissolve.

“ It grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength.”

The sensations thence derived fix on the soul with inseparable adhesion, and become as it were a quality of it : they participate in its pleasures, and sympathize with it in its pains : they attend it through all the vicissitudes of life, undivided from it by time or place. The mind not only experiences in these tenderest of all sensations the most refined pleasure, but, from the

the feelings of approving conscience; it finds impressed on them the stamp of virtue too; and as such the sanction of divine approbation. Yet in the cultivation of those connections; which carry in them the test of virtue, and the approbation of God, we are treasuring up to ourselves a fund of sorrow and incompensable grief; upon the ground of there being in the next world no renewal of them. When the fatal summons calls away the friend of our bosom; and the tender relative; we lose the best ingredient in the cup of life: and the loss leaves only dregs behind, except in the hope of meeting again. And that hope, which the God of nature suggests, illustrative of his benignity, acts with a further influence on the soul; reconciling us to our own removal hence; and arming us against that formidable break in our existence, to which the divine denunciation had destined us.* Must we not then admit the bright; consolatory cherub; for the two-fold purpose of administering consolation, and supplying fortitude, so graciously communicated; that visits us with healing on its wings, to be the messenger of God to us for good; and, if from Him, the messenger of truth?

* Gen. 2. 27. Dying thou shalt die.

66 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

But further, this loss we are considering leaves generally a void in the mind ; which nothing will effectually fill up. The attention of new connections may gain our esteem ; but are seldom found to displace the former ones from their attached hold on our affections. The mind hankers after those it has lost : it loves to steal from assiduities, that flutter on the surface of our affection ; and to devote the solitary hour of contemplation to those images, those shadowy pictures,* that still engross it. Those objects of its former affections still maintain their place in the mind, though only in idea : and what forbids, that they should again fill that vacant place, which admits no substitute, in reality ? They have passed the formidable portal, which we must also pass, and soon. They are gone to another world, which we must visit too. And hath God shewn us either by the light of nature, or the bright sun-beam of revelation ; hath He in the still voice of reason, or in the clearer language of scripture declared, that human souls, when from this world dismissed, and assembled in another, shall never meet and recognise each other, shall in habits of social affection, sanc-

* *Pictura pascit inani.*—VIRG.

tioned by his approbation, never be united again? The greatest sceptic on the subject we are now discussing must acknowledge, that He has made no such declaration; but on the contrary inspires the soothing hopes of a re-union. On his goodness therefore I ground an argument, in assurance that such re-union will be hereafter indulged us.

Such gratification of our virtuous hopes is consistent with the universal display of goodness, that appears in every point of view in which we contemplate the infinite benignity of the divine dispensations. When we reflect on the vast train of those dispensations, every link gilt with mercies, and beaming blessings on mankind; when we pursue them through the whole economy of God's dealings with his creature man; we see both in his moral and natural government of the world nothing but instances of adorable benignity. We experience every virtuous exertion supported, we feel every worthy design promoted, often by secret causes, and unaccountable means; we trace the plan of providential goodness through the life of the individuals, and through the vast mass of the whole. And will He stop His leading hand, as soon as we pass the threshold of this world? Is He not Lord of the other world,

68 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

as well as this : God of Gods, and Lord of Lords? Will those virtuous dispositions, that experienced the sanction of his favour here, droop afterwards unregarded by Him, and unsupported? Will his eye of favour be withdrawn, and his mercy gone for ever? Doth He approve and promote any one virtuous tendency; and will He not finally support it to its full extent? The social sensations are an ornament to the soul: and will God strip it of them, when it is ordered hence? These are questions that resolve themselves, on contemplation of the little we are permitted to see of his super-intending goodness and power. And shall those habits of virtuous souls, that have strengthened each other in the mutual exercise of warm benevolence, and acts of piety, which He commanded, that have fortified each other by mutual lessons of resignation to his high will, and borne aright the trying bolts of his harsher dispensations, shall they all droop and languish here, even in their very bud; or bear their blossoms in another world, the fruits of happy union? As sure as God approves of such sympathy of soul, and its social affections here, though for a moment He suffer the union to be interrupted; so sure ground have we to conclude, He will hereafter renew and continue it :
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bound and knit together in firmer and more perfect ties, conducive to further purposes and a more permanent plan, and shining with purer lustre as it advances, through boundless time and realms of boundless space.

Consider next the extraordinary efforts, which the spirit of enterprise sometimes forms in order to effect in this world a meeting with the objects of attached affection; far from whom some stroke of adverse fortune may have hurled the friend, whose life languishes in sorrow under the separation. On bare recital of such enterprise, though the parties concerned in it be unknown, the mind of sensibility takes an interesting part even in the abstract act. It applauds the attempt; it attends the generous effort with the warm wishes of success. But the mind, uninfluenced by prejudice, and unseduced by passion, can not applaud a vicious action. The exertions therefore supposed bear the stamp of virtue on them, and as such the seal of God's approbation. And what He approves, to that He will also extend encouragement, and efficient support. Hence we infer, that as such impulse of mutual attachments is founded in virtue, they are derived from God, and by him encouraged: and hence have we every ground of confidence, that when with-

out his support they can no longer operate, his training hand, that fostered, will support them ; and that those who in this world have in virtuous habits been mutually attached, whom his justice by the law of death, which he ordained, for a moment divided, his mercy will finally re-unite, and render happy.

In the representation, as above suggested, let us suppose success to attend the enterprise ; and endeavour to figure to ourselves the happiness consequent of the event. What pleasure to recount temptations baffled, difficulties surmounted ; and, in the warm sunshine of enjoyment, to look back on our late dwelling, the gloomy cave of despair ! But if in this world, the chequered scene of changes and chances, the moment of meeting be winged with so much satisfaction ; what must be the excess of delight, that will attend such a junction hereafter ! This world presents no novelty of scene to engage our future converse, and employ our mutual wonder. Here is no increase of knowledge, and by consequence of happiness, to extend and employ the intellectual powers. Here open no new sources of untasted joys ; here exists no shelter from the busy bolts of adversity that will still fly as usual about us. And what is worst of all, we have no security
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for any long possession of those joys so ardently pursued, and with so much difficulty re-obtained; subject, as before, to separation and alloy.

But of the next state mark the difference. There novelty of scene will engage our mutual admiration: while glancing into secrets of nature, here buried in impenetrable darkness, we shall be permitted in a nearer approach to pay our adoration to nature's God. And while we feel increased knowledge like a flood of light pour into our enlarged understanding, we find an increase of happiness too: new organs of delight, and new objects correspondent to them. No clouds of care there gather, and deform the bright serene of that pure Ether; no sighs of sorrow are wasted there. And what crowns all, we shall be then secure against the chance of change, against the wear of time; time only counted by enjoyments, and enjoyments quickened without satiety.*

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* A difficulty has been urged against the future recognition of each other, grounding on the supposition, that as the sociable attachments were implanted in us only for the purposes of this present state, they would of course cease with it. In satisfaction of which doubt, the writer, who in one of the public prints hath addressed it to the author of these discourses, is referred to DISCOURSE II. Sect. ii. 6.

72 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

In contemplating this prospect, what motives doth it suggest, to press forward to the *high mark of such a calling* ! Do we wish to converse, eternally to live with our virtuous friends and connections again ? We have only to study their lives, and imitate their examples ; if we can improve upon their lives, it will be our praise, our happiness to do it. We shall meet them with greater pleasure, and they will welcome us with greater praise. For envy and every malignant quality will find no admittance there. But should we lose the great end of our existence, and forfeit the happiness of admission into that kingdom which endureth for ever ; lost to our near and dear friends, as they to us ; and outcasts from Paradise ; conception can not form the pangs remorse will give us. On the same

where it is contended, and shewn, that the sociable attachments extend farther than the exigencies of this life require. The inference therefore apprehended falls to the ground. The attachments of the child to the parent after he no longer wants his support, of the husband to the wife after the instinctive appetite has subsided, and particularly those of friendship, are perfectly independent of the exigencies of life : and the continuance of those attachments to the verge of the grave forms an argument for the renewal of them even beyond it.

principle,

principle, reflecting on those dear connections who have finished their course before us, and finished it well ; who are called to enjoy the fruits of their labour ; who are ready to welcome us to the house of God, where our blessed Lord hath prepared for us *many*, or more properly, *various* mansions, various as the merits of those who are called to them ; we shall learn to struggle with the infirmities of nature, and to felicitate ourselves on having a near and dear friend gone before ; whom, when we have received our happy dismissal, we shall find with mind elate at the sacred threshold prepared and ready to meet us. Blessed state of permanent felicity, happy inhabitants that have attained to it ! How does every thing that is earthly sicken in the eye, that is raised up to you ! What is all the tinsel here below ; what are all the rubs and buffetings we can experience here, in contrast with that opening scene, to which in fair hopes God himself hath raised the mind of man ? And God, it is the ground on which I rest this structure of my hopes, and therefore I repeat it, God can not deceive his humble and adoring creatures.

II. Let us next, as another inference, consider our subject in a different view. *To day shall thou be with me in Paradise.* What a change of situation

74 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

ation, doth our Lord here speak to this miserable malefactor ! And what a lesson doth it inculcate against despondency and despair ! To satisfy ourselves that no station is so deplorable, but the mercy of God if fitly implored will visit it ; that no condition of life can be so lost, but the goodness of God can with the beams of consolation cheer it ; that no visitation of evil can be so heavy, as the power of God can not alleviate, or, if he please, remove ; let us raise our eyes to the expressive picture before us. Behold a man overtaken in his wickedness, devoted to severe punishments, those punishments, aggravated by a just sense of accumulated guilt. The hour arrives, and he is led to the scene of slaughter. No reprieve, no rescue ; he is suspended in agonies on the fatal tree. Yet in that calamitous situation, forsaken even of the flatterer hope, in the article of death he finds life, and experiences redemption. He acknowledges his sins, he confesses the justice of his punishment : and his heart thus prepared by penitence and contrition to receive salvation, his eyes are opened, and he beholds at his side his suffering Saviour and his God. Heaven opened to his view, the effulgence of divinity beamed on him from the cross : his soul is instantly raised above the littleness of the world, and

and every idea that is level with it. That world, of late the idol of his desires, now appears to him the bubble that it is; he wonders that so poor a lure could bribe him to the commission of a single crime. He asks not to be indulged in the longer enjoyment of it, he supplicates not for life and liberty; his prayer was of a higher nature; *Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

And how does our Lord receive the prayer of this repentant sinner? He, whose condition was as superiour to the judge who condemned, as the malefactor who was convicted, ever looked down superiour on the petty distinctions of worldly rank and greatness. While to contemptuous scorn he held out the hypocrisy of the chief Priests and Pharisees; graciously would he condescend to associate with, and instruct the lowly-minded and humble sinner. Such was the case in the instance before us. Our Lord did not with fastidious neglect disregard the humble petition of the suffering malefactor before him; he did not suppose it an indignity to him, with condescending attention to regard a poor forlorn criminal, suspended at his side in ignominious punishment; the punishment at that time and place more particularly calculated to reflect the greater

76 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

greater shew of ignominy on himself. Low probably in his original rank of life, rendered lower by his crimes, and further degraded by the ignominious punishment of them, the penitential suppliant notwithstanding addressed not to his Saviour his prayer in vain. He, who had so often displayed his knowledge of the human heart, saw in that of the dying malefactor unfeigned contrition, and abhorrence of his sins; saw in his renovated mind good intentions, that from the fountain of mercy might obtain forgiveness; and aspiring after perfection, that might entitle him to rewards. He raised him from despondency, he spoke peace; he spoke more, he spoke exultation and joy to his expiring soul: *to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

After such an instance of unexpected deliverance from so abject a state, after such a transition from extreme misery to the summit of felicity; who shall have drank so deep of the cup of affliction, as to suffer himself to be overborn, and driven by it to the phrensy of despair? Who, after so signal an instance of forgiveness, shall despond, if his repentance be sincere? But we must take care not to mistake sufferings for merit, not to place the mere affliction of misery to the account of desert, and a title to remuneration,

Discourses on a future Existence, &c. 77

tion. Sufferings may lead to it, when they awaken us to a sense of duty ; or when by a proper conduct under the pressure of them we evince resignation, patience, and fortitude. And, on the other hand, we may also suffer here, even to the end of life ; and become miserable hereafter. For an instance of this, look to the other side of our crucified Lord and Master.

There behold a malefactor, his heart seared in wickedness, his body wrung with torture, his soul insensible of remorse, and touched only with concern at the unsuccessful issue of his crimes. The lure of worldly pleasure, and power, and affluence, the attainment of which was the motive to his crimes, still held the uppermost place in his dark and groveling mind. Hear him at that awful hour maligning his Redeemer, and demanding the exercise of his power to restore him to a few years of longer riot in the sensual enjoyments of this poor perishable world. “ If
“ thou beest, as thou professest thyself, and as
“ thy followers proclaim thee, the son of God,
“ and as such hast heaven and earth at thy command ; save thyself and us : now display thy
“ divinity, and exert thy power ; liberate thyself and us from the tortures we suffer ; give
“ us to descend from the cross, to astonish man-
“ kind,

78 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

“ kind, to receive the applauses of the world;
“ and enjoy the good things of it, that after such
“ an instance of godlike power will then be pro-
“ fusely offered us. Give me this world’s good
“ and dispose of the next to those who wish it.”
To this reproachful language, he, who was all
benignity, replies in no angry retort: no expres-
sion of resentment passes his lips: no severe re-
flection, calculated to aggravate the unhappy
wretch’s sufferings, is returned. He saw pro-
fligacy of mind, that could not be reclaimed;
and with silent pity alike regarded his situation,
and reviles.

III. Thirdly, let us hear on this occasion the
reflection of the temporising casuist, of him who
with a happy dexterity would wish to unite the
enjoyment of both worlds; to surfeit in the full
range of pleasure, which this world holds out;
and to secure that state of unchangeable happi-
ness, which revelation, reason, and conscience,
on certain conditions, assure to him in the next.
Suppose, says he, this declaration of our Lord
to the repentant malefactor, *to day shalt thou be
with me in Paradise*, had the effect represented;
admitted, that he overlooked the pleasures and
enjoyments of the world, his thoughts fixed on,
and his soul full of that other world which is to
come;

Discourses on a future Existence, &c. 49

come ; he was at the extremity of life, on the very verge of that world to which his petitions tended : but the promise can not be supposed to have the same effect on us, who by means of youth, health, and strength may reasonably look forwards to many a year's enjoyment of this world ; and therefore why throw a shade over the bright sunshine of life, by holding ever before our eyes the dark portal, we may not till perhaps at some very distant period be called to pass ?

This observation, which is a very common one, involves two mistakes, that I would wish to set right. First, the summons is not so far distant, as we may be apt to suppose it. And secondly, it is not of that gloomy nature, which should deter us from contemplating it.

1. And first, our age, as contemplated by that serious observer of human nature, the royal Psalmist, in respect to the brevity of it, is said to be but *a span long*. And of that span those, who have already passed a part of it, can of the extent of the remainder form no very favourable idea. Presuming on ten, twenty, or thirty years before hand, the distance it is allowed seems great ; but the appearance is fallacious. There is but one proper way of forming the estimate of it :

80 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

of it : and that all must allow to be a fair one. It is by comparing a given period, of ten years for instance, before us, with the same distance of time past. On such comparison, we may be surpris'd at it's apparent shortness : but it is better to be so surpris'd, than deceived by an apprehension of the too great length of it.

And if in contemplating the shortness of life, we also take into our account the uncertainty of it ; the promise of our Lord to the malefactor will as a general monition the more sensibly impress us. *To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* And what security have any of us against the literal completion of this declaration ? Will youth prevent the summons ; or will strength elude it ? If neither the one, nor the other, nor any other armour, which art, or nature's self can forge, will securely shield us against it ; the only expedient that remains to us, is to be ever on our guard against it, ever prepared to meet it with becoming fortitude. And to this purpose nothing will so much, as frequent contemplation, conduce. For it is a rule, that runs through nature ; the more we contemplate an object, the less forcibly it continues to affect us.

2. But secondly, another and no less common error is the opinion, that the contemplation of death

death casts a shade upon the bright side of life. No, not on the brightest. Take, for truth, the word of truth itself; and what doth it announce? That when the good go from hence, they remove to Paradise; they go to the intermediate state of *good spirits made perfect*; even to the state, in which they would have been, had man never offended; and death never intervened. And is there any thing terrible in this prospect to a mind accustomed to look upon it? We go to the place, where our good and virtuous friends are gone before; and whither those, we leave behind, will follow us. We go *immediately* thither; no purgatory to pass through, no long sleep to bind the sluggish soul. *To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* “As soon as ever you quit this state of miserable existence, depend on my word, and this assurance of my promise, you shall enter the assembly of the happy, just and good; and there see me your Prince and Saviour.” The promise may be conceived a general one; and as extending to all good persons. And is there any thing formidable in the thought of realising that promise, and appropriating it to ourselves? Does it cast a shade over the bright scenes of this life? Does it not rather increase the brightness of them; by promising

82 *Discourses on a future Existence, &c.*

an increase of splendour, and the continuance of it? Without permanency, the purest pleasure has a severe alloy even in the bare apprehension of losing it; by being called away, we know not how soon, and destined to we know not where. But upon this promise of our Lord, as a ground of stable and sure repose, looking not only without terror, but with joy and exultation, to that hour which shall terminate our labours, and summon us to our home, to a re-union with our friends, and family in Paradise; Fear yields its place to hope, and *death is swallowed up in victory.*

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page 1, note, for ETERNAL, read ETERNAL; page 21, note, for Bolingbrooke, read Bolingbroke; page 28, line 23, for then, read than; page 38, note, for Matthew 23, read Matthew 22; page 43, line 16, for once, read once; page 45, last line, for incompatible, read incompatible; page 47, line 24 delete one the; page 48, add as a note, † Dan. 12.

